



Alaska Syndromic Surveillance for COVID-Like Illness (CLI)

Weeks 1 - 17: January 1 – April 25, 2020

Updated weekly on Wednesdays – last updated May 4 2020

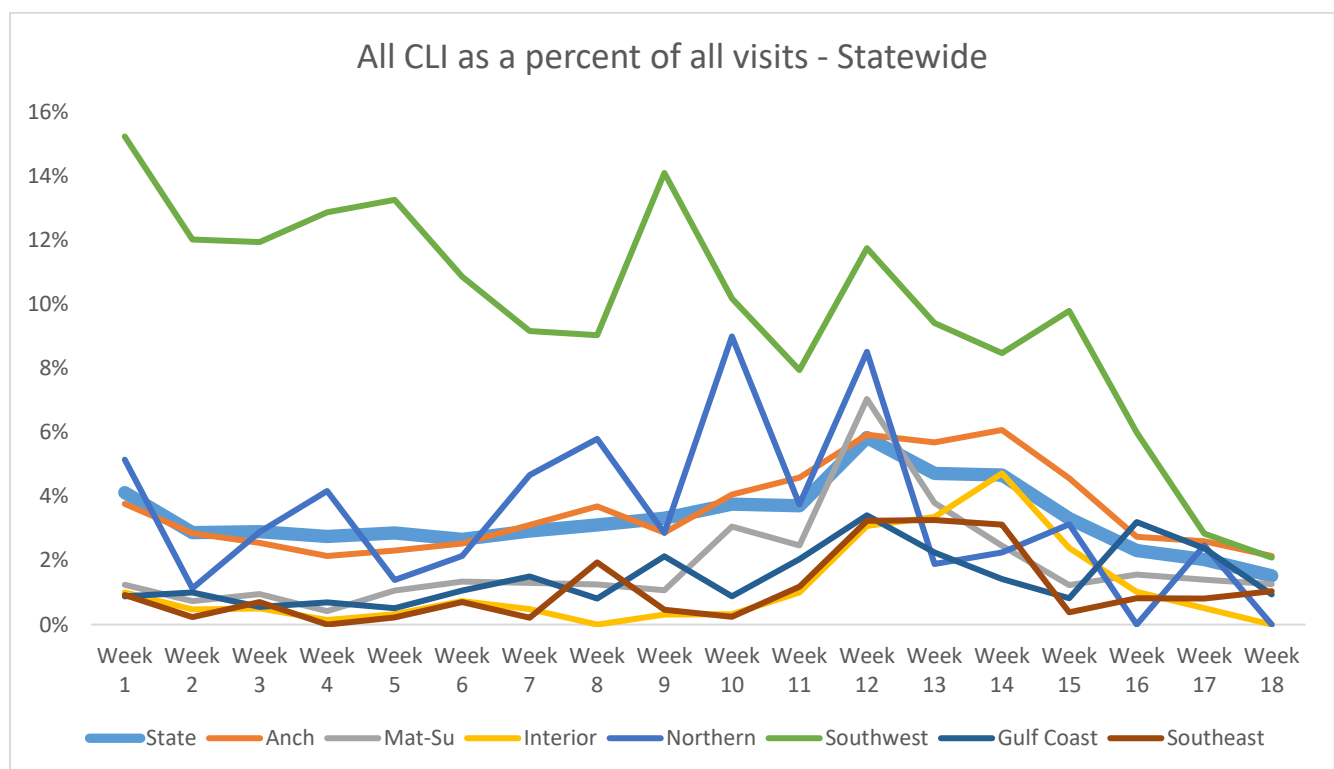
Summary:

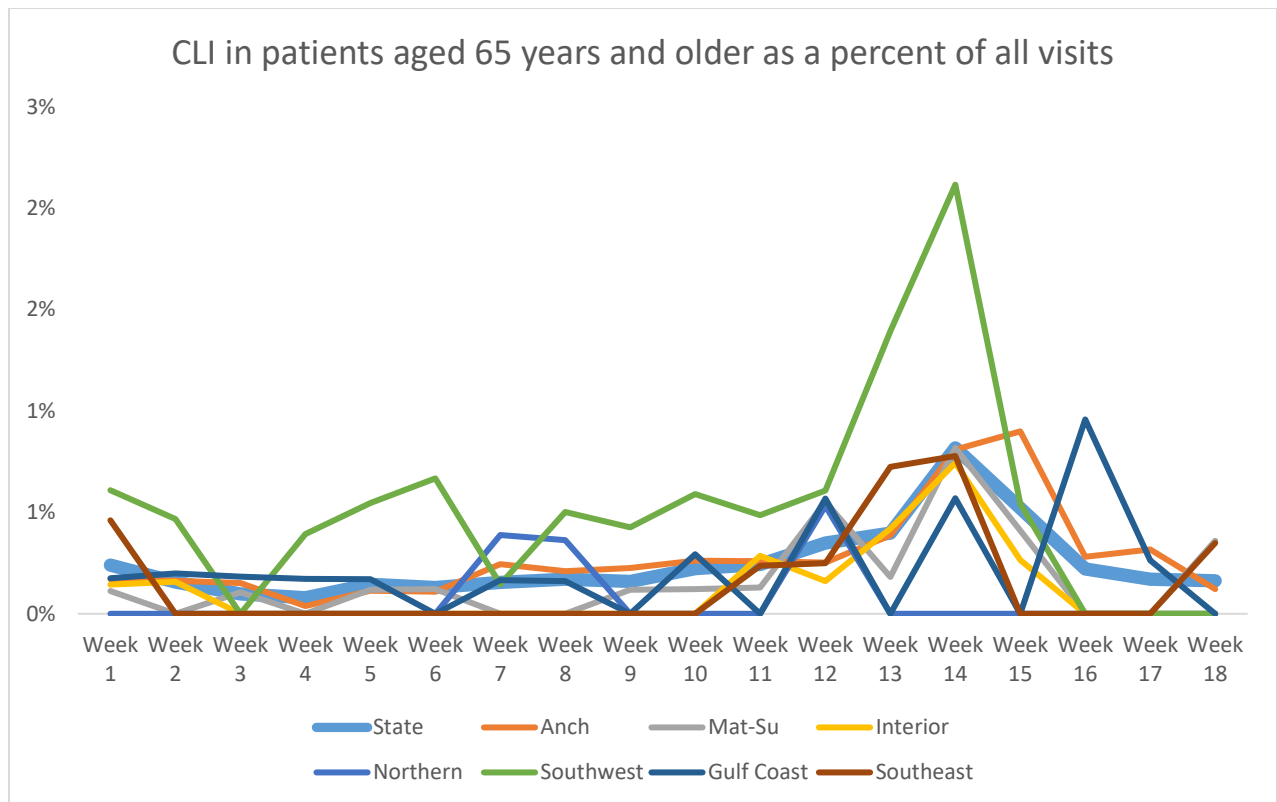
These data show people presenting to Alaska emergency departments for illness compatible with COVID-19. Data are produced using text searches of chief complaints and diagnosis codes that suggest COVID-like illness (CLI). Visits are removed for patients who have a diagnosis code for a different pathogen, such as influenza, respiratory syncytial virus, or *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. Data are reported by week, using the [week number](#).

Syndromic data comes with a large measure of uncertainty. **These are NOT confirmed cases of COVID-19.** Many of these individuals do not have COVID-19, and many actual cases of COVID-19 do not seek emergency department care.

Additionally, the following **limitations** should be considered when analyzing these data:

- Not all Alaska emergency departments participate in syndromic surveillance. Furthermore, some hospitals have elected to set up a separate area in their hospital to triage and treat patients with respiratory infection, which may prevent those visits from appearing in these data.
- Many or most COVID-19 patients do not require a hospital level of care, and many will not visit an emergency department for this illness.
- Social distancing, hunker-down orders, and other behavior changes have significantly altered how, when, and why Alaskans seek healthcare. This has resulted in a substantial decrease in emergency department visits. This makes understanding the meaning of numbers and trends more complicated than usual.
- Patient region was assigned based on the zipcode of the patients' home address. This doesn't necessarily match where they were seen, or where they might have been exposed.

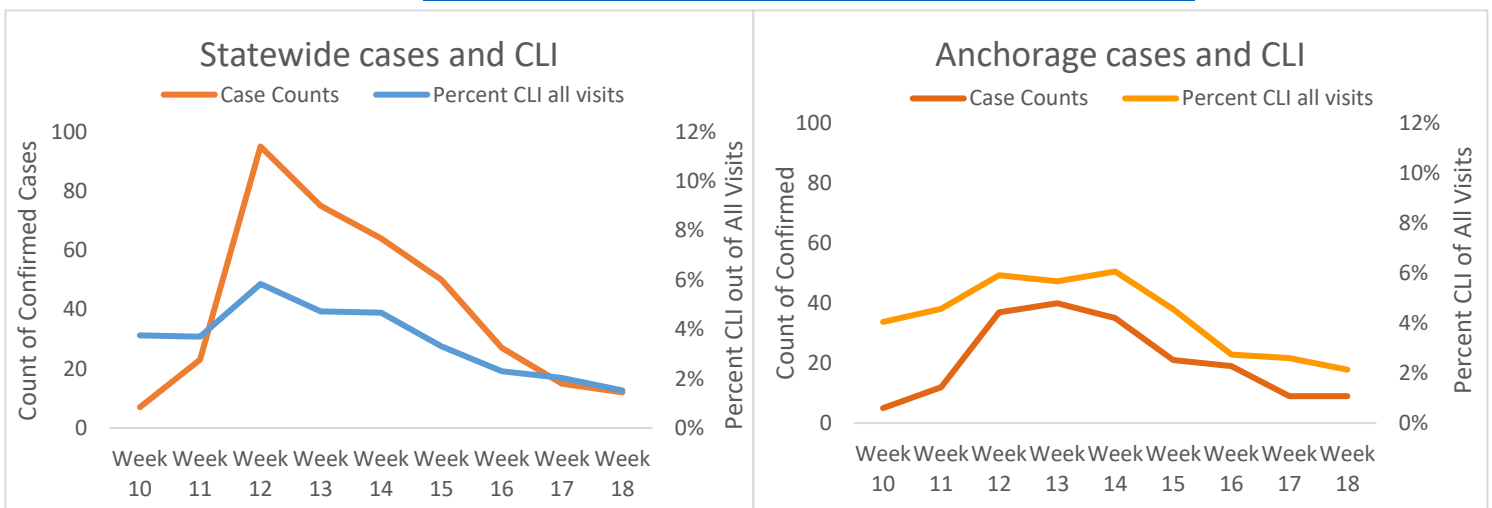




Interpretation:

- The proportion of ED visits with CLI peaked in week 12, which is also when cases peaked statewide.
- In some regions, CLI has consistently trended downward from that peak. In other regions, there was an increase in activity in weeks 16 and 17.
- CLI in patients aged 65 and older peaked in week 14, later than for the general population.

Comparison of CLI data with [counts of laboratory-confirmed cases found on dashboard](#):





Resources

- More information about syndromic surveillance in Alaska is available [here](#).
- National syndromic surveillance data for CLI are [here](#).
- Alaska data for Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) are presented in weekly FluSnapshots available [here](#).